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GENERAL NEWS.

A young man of much modesty, who was left alone in a dry goods store in Pittsfield during the dinner hour, received a visit from a beautiful young lady, who, after selecting some goods, expressed a great desire to try on a hoop skirt. The blushing clerk was much embarrassed by the proposition, but as the lady insisted, and appeared to be inclined to carry out her intention in the store, he begged her to walk into a private room in the rear. This she did taking the goods she had selected with her. The clerk feeling great hesitation about hurrying a lady in so delicate an operation, left her there about fifteen minutes undisturbed, but thinking at last that she must have had sufficient time to re-arrange her toilet, gently opened the door, and found the window open, and the handsome lady, the goods, and the hoop skirt gone!

The Missouri State Convention met at Jefferson City on the 2d instant. The Governor sent them a long message, in which he reviews the history of State affairs for the past year, in detail, especially in reference to the provisional government, in raising and supplying troops, and expresses the obligation the State is under to the general government for the promptness and liberality with which its wants have been supplied. There have been issued to disbursing officers \$720,000 in State defence warrants, and a further amount of \$55,000 will have to be issued. \$100,000 have been redeemed by receipts for taxes from forty-one counties.

It is said, on the authority of a distinguished member of the clergy at Paris, so the Messenger Franco-American states, that the Pope will hold a council about the 12th or 15th of June, when, if the advices from France show no modification of the present position, on the breaking up of the council, he will take a solemn farewell of the prelates, leave the pontifical States, and with a good understanding with Austria and Spain, await the progress of events. [This is, probably, a story on mere rumor.]

The late rain storm was very general and very destructive. It is reported that several locks and dams on the C. & O. Canal have been carried away; and the Railroad bridge over the Potomac at Harper's Ferry was destroyed—being the fourth time in a twelve month. A pontoon bridge and ferry are at once to be established at that point. Accounts from all the valleys and rivers in the upper country in Virginia speak of much loss and destruction of property. In Pennsylvania, the Delaware and Lehigh rivers were much swollen and overflowed their banks, the canals broken, and some lives lost.

Thomas Winans, and his family, of Baltimore, have sailed for Europe.

In his account of the first battle of Front Royal, Col. Kenly "speaks in the highest terms of the manner in which his regiment acted, obeying every command, and fighting until the last hope of succor was gone. The Colonel also speaks in the greatest praise of the daring bravery and soldier-like behaviour of Ashby's Cavalry. The story of Col. Kenly having been shot in an ambulance, and his wounded men butchered upon the field, and other like horrible stories, are placed in the category of mere fabrications, the true fact of the battle of Front Royal being that a large force attacked a small force, and after four or five hours' hard fighting, the smaller force after being surrounded, surrendered."

A man from Baltimore named William Walger was arrested in the joiners' shop, at the navy-yard, in Washington, where he was at work, yesterday, on the charge of being disloyal to the government. The charge was made by a man in Baltimore. He had a partial examination, which revealed nothing, besides the affidavit of the accuser, to sustain the charge.

The Philadelphia Gazette of yesterday says: "The stock market was buoyant and quite active again yesterday. There was a good demand for investment, most of the reliable securities realizing rather better prices, while for some an advance of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ was obtained on the previous sales, the whole list closing firm. U. S. coupon 6's, 81's, sold at 105 $\frac{1}{2}$; the 7.30 Treasury notes, endorsed, 105 $\frac{1}{2}$."

Upon the tax and tariff questions, to which the necessity for a revenue of one or two hundred millions a year has given rise, the Eastern and the Western States are brought into conflict. The West, as an agricultural country, cannot pay a share of taxes proportioned to their population. The chief burden of taxation, no matter what may be its form will fall on the middle and eastern States.

The Paris papers announce that the King of Prussia has conferred upon Ristori the Order and gold medal of merit for "Arts and Sciences." This is the first instance on record of the order having been conferred on a woman. The King handed it himself to the great tragedienne at a private audience at the royal palace, accompanied with the diploma, beautifully engrossed on parchment, and a superb gold bracelet, to be worn with the medal.

The N. Y. Herald, in its account of the recent severe fighting before Richmond, says:—"The battle flag is doubtless what has given rise to the many stories of the enemy's exhibition of flags of truce in battle. It is a small, square, white flag, with sometimes a regimental insignia upon the center, and at others with a green cross charged with stars. It is light—as we know, having taken one—and just the thing to carry."

In the tax bill now before the U. S. Senate the owners of slaves are taxed two dollars for each slave, and a slave cannot be sold to pay the tax.

A deserter, claiming to have been a telegraph operator at Beauregard's headquarters, states that ten days ago dispatches were sent to the commanding officer to hold Mobile at all hazards, as it would be the base of important operations, in prospective, and that reinforcements were sent to them immediately thereafter.

The Boston Traveller says that an intelligent officer of the U. S. Army thinks "that only a small portion of the contrabands can be relied on by either side" and that the U. S. government has suffered more than it has gained by "negro spies."

The president of the Girard Bank has announced that the circulation of one dollar notes is no profit to the institution, and that if it is no inconvenience to the community the notes will be exchanged for U. S. treasury notes.

The Charleston Mercury says that by the possession of Stono, only James' Island intervenes between the Federal fleet and the city of Charleston—and that the distance is only eight miles.

It is stated that last Sunday, during the storm near Cincinnati, hailstones from three to seven inches in diameter fell, doing great injury to the crops and vegetables.

The common council of the city of London have unanimously agreed to present the freedom of the city to Mr. Peabody for his munificent gift.

The heavy cannonade of Saturday last shook the city of Richmond, and many of the inhabitants of the city, it is said, are rapidly leaving it.

There is yet direct railroad communication from Richmond, via Atlanta and Mobile, to Memphis and Corinth.

The residence of Gen. Jeff. Davis, on the Mississippi river, has been battered down and destroyed.

A Confederate steamer came to Jacksonville, Arkansas, on the 3d, and destroyed a quantity of cotton and sugar there.

FREE NEGROES.—The following is a table showing the number of free negroes, North and South, and also exhibits what is perhaps not generally known, that there are more free negroes in the fifteen slave States and in the District of Columbia, than in the nineteen Free States:

In the Free States.—California, 3,815; Connecticut, 8,452; Illinois, 7,969; Indiana, 10,069; Iowa, 1,023; Kansas, 623; Maine, 1,195; Massachusetts, 9,454; Michigan, 6,823; Minnesota, 229; New Hampshire, 450; New Jersey, 24,947; New York, 49,005; Ohio, 36,225; Oregon, 121; Pennsylvania, 56,373; R. Island, 3,918; Vermont, 581; Wisconsin, 1,471. Total, 222,745.

In the Slave States.—Alabama, 2,630; Arkansas, 137; Delaware, 19,723; Florida, 908; Georgia, 3,459; Kentucky, 10,146; Louisiana, 18,638; Maryland, 83,718; Mississippi, 731; Missouri, 2,933; North Carolina, 30,097; South Carolina, 9,648; Tennessee, 339; Virginia, 57,519; District of Columbia, 11,007. Total, 259,078.